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Eric King and David Campbell, both contributors to Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners, discuss their experience behind bars, exploring the political and physical implications of opposing fascism and white supremacy while living under state control.

This event was a fundraiser for the International Anti-Fascist Defence Fund.

Donations can be made at fundrazr.com/defendantifa

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RATTLING THE CAGES

ORAL HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

"Antifascism Behind Bars"

ERIC KING | DAVID CAMPBELL | ALISSA AZAR

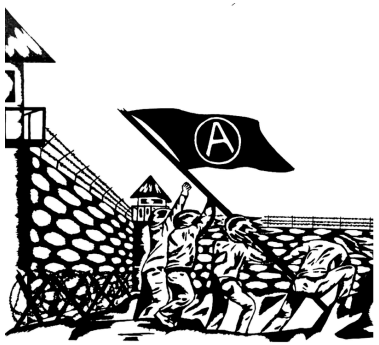
Originally hosted as a live conversation by Firestorm Books,
recording available on Firestorm's youtube channel:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMjdSc_LGO4
July 21, 2024

Published by AK Press, *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners* is a project of abolitionists Josh Davidson and Eric King. The book is filled with the experience and wisdom of over thirty current and former North American political prisoners. It provides first-hand details of prison life and the political commitments that continue to lead prisoners into direct confrontation with state authorities and institutions.

Transcription, editing, and formatting by ev, Danielle, Josh, & Jeremy with help from Firestorm Books.

all labor volunteered

with whatever weapons at hand



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Buy a Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar (*certaindays.org*).

Visit your local Books Through Bars group and send books to those incarcerated (*booksthroughbarsnyc.org/resources*).

Join your nearest Anarchist Black Cross group (*abcf.net*).

Visit *rattlingthecages.com* to learn more.

Eric King is a father, poet, author, and activist. In December 2023 he was released from the supermax ADX prison after spending nearly ten years as a political prisoner for an act of protest over the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. He was held in solitary confinement for years and was met with violence by guards throughout his incarceration. Eric has published three zines: *Battle Tested* (2015), *Antifa in Prison* (2019), and *Pacing in My Cell* (2019). His sentencing statement is included in the book *Defiance: Anarchist Statements Before Judge and Jury* (2019). Eric now works as a paralegal for the Bread and Roses Legal Center.

David Campbell is a lover of language and the arts, who was two weeks away from moving to Paris to study French translation when his dedication to combat the alt-right drew him to a protest. At the protest, a brawl broke out in which a fifty-six-year-old intoxicated alt-right man was knocked unconscious. Cops stepped in and broke David's leg in two places. The District Attorney's office filed gang assault charges against David, who took a noncooperating plea agreement. He served eighteen months at Rikers Island, coinciding with the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. David translated *Revolutionary Affinities: Toward a Marxist Anarchist Solidarity* (2023), a sweeping history by French authors Olivier Besancenot and Michael Löwy.

Alissa Azar is an independent journalist originally from Syria who covers right wing violence and activity, as well as antifascism in the Pacific Northwest. In May they were arrested and charged with trespassing while attempted to cover the police clearing of a pro-Palestinian encampment at Portland State University, for which they were sentenced to 14 days in jail. Alissa has received support from a coalition of organizations, including the Freedom of the Press Foundation and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

The International Anti-Fascist Defense Fund (IADF) founders saw a need for a standing fund that could be used to provide immediate support to anti-fascists and anti-racists anywhere in the world, whenever they found themselves in a difficult situation as a result of their stand against hate. Modeled on the defense fund run by the Anti-Racist Action Network in the late 1990s/early 2000s, the IADF accepts proposals for support from anyone. *For more information:* intlantifadefence.wordpress.com

Rattling the Cages

1) Political Prisoners, Mass Incarceration, & Abolition
Eric King, Herman Bell, David Gilbert, Susan Rosenberg

2). Continuing the Struggle Inside & Out
Eric King, Ashanti Alston, Ray Luc Levasseur

3) Antifascism Behind Bars
Eric King and David Campbell

4) Black August & Prisoner Support
Eric King, dequi kioni-sadiki, Harold Taylor

5) Eric King in Conversation with James Kilgore
Eric King, James Kilgore

6) Post-Prison Activism & Archiving Resistance
Eric King, Jake Conroy, Claude Marks

7) Until All Are Free
Eric King, Jason Hammond, Jeremy Hammond

8) Revolutionary Women Behind Bars
Eric King, Linda Evans, Laura Whitehorn, Nicole Kissane

9) Becoming Politicized in Prison
Eric King, Josh Davidson, Hector Rodriguez, Farhan Ahmed

10) Rattling the Cages: How We Dit It & How You Can Too
Eric King, Sara Falconer, Josh Davidson

11) Abolition Is a Family Affair
Eric King, Sharon Shoatz, susie day, Rochell Bricker

12) Looking Back at the George Jackson Brigade
Mark Cook, Janine Bertram, Eric King

all conversations are available @FirestormCoop on youtube

Write to Political Prisoners mentioned in this conversation

for a monthly updated list of political prisoners & their addresses visit

nycabc.wordpress.com

Libertie Valence: We really appreciate everybody turning out tonight. My name is Libertie, and I'm a member of The Firestorm Collective. Tonight we're excited to host contributors to *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners* for a conversation on the political and physical implications of opposing fascism and white supremacy while living under state control. If you don't already know, this is part of a series that Eric King and Josh Davidson have been coordinating with our friends from AK Press. This is actually the third event in the series, so definitely go check out the first two which were fantastic. They're available on YouTube.

Firestorm is a 16-year-old radical bookstore owned and operated by a queer feminist collective in southern Appalachia on the land of the Cherokee people. We strive to feature books and events like this one that reflect our interests and the needs of marginalized communities in the South. We're also continuing to do book events online in addition to doing things in store, because we love to be able to connect with people at a distance and across borders as we're doing tonight, and also because we know that Covid continues to be a significant barrier for a lot of folks in our community to connect and engage.

Tonight, in anticipation of the International Day of Solidarity with Anti-Fascist Prisoners on July 25th, we're doing this event as a fundraiser for the International Anti-Fascist Defense Fund, and as of a few minutes ago when I checked it looked like attendees had helped us raise about $350 which is great.

Thanks so much friends! Really appreciate you joining us here. I know we're gonna have a great conversation. I'm going to go ahead and pass it off to Alissa.

Alissa Azar: Thank you so much for hosting us and having us today. I think this is going to be an interesting and informative talk. Before we start, I just wanted to say: solidarity with Palestine! Solidarity with Palestinians and with the resistance! Solidarity with anti-fascists everywhere! I don't want to say that word now in an elevated political climate because I think fascism has been here for quite some time, but things certainly do seem to be escalating rather quickly at the same time as a sort of mainstream-ification of fascism, if you will, so I think solidarity now is really, really so important.

The first question I have for you guys is if you could start off with maybe sharing what you were charged with, what you were sentenced for, and maybe how long you both spent inside?

David Campbell: Yeah, sure. I could start that. I was originally charged with a whole range of wacky stuff. I was charged with loitering while wearing a disguise, and, oh man, all kinds of stuff that was thrown out. The cop, as Libertie mentioned, broke my leg when he arrested me and just kind of appeared on the scene while this brawl was going on, didn't say anything, just charged at me, broke my leg. Immediately the paper trail that he started creating was that, "He was super violent, I had to restrain him with my partner, and he was trying to put me in a headlock, and put this other guy in a headlock." None of that was true.

My original charges and what was picked up and reported, not very heavily on—but for a minute there it was held up by the far right, was going around Twitter and tabloids—was that I had tried to strangle this guy, this 56 year old guy, who was knocked out, that I punched him repeatedly, that I tried to strangle the cop, and nothing about my leg, right? That was the original narrative, and the charges fit that narrative, because cops can do this. They will create a narrative. They'll craft charges to fit it, and the DA will be like, "Yeah, that sounds reasonable. Let's give this guy 'X' amount of time." Right? It happens all the time. I swear to God. I would not have been able to tell you that before my arrest, but I promise you that's a real thing.

Then we got video camera footage—video camera footage, you know, like the kids for their video cameras—so we got security camera footage, right, and it showed none of this. All those charges were dropped, and they charged me with gang assault, which is very hard to beat. It's a New York state law that dates to the Giuliani era when they were locking up lots of young Black and brown men primarily, you know "cleaning up the city." It's a very low burden of proof. You fit the statute if you are in a group of three or more people and you're in a fight. It's a three and a half year mandatory minimum. Basically, if you're in a fight with three or more people and they have video of it, you can't claim self-defense unless you try to run away first, right? You're going to do three and a half years in prison if they want to pursue that. There were a couple other charges on there, like assault with an object. I kicked the guy while wearing a shoe, so instead of just charging me with simple assault, they charged me with

have relationships with Uprising defendants and prisoners. We have done our best to communicate with defendants and inform them that since ours is a struggle for total collective liberation that we will not list people who stand for sexism, homophobia, racism, transphobia or other forms of domination. We also will not list or support people who cooperate with the government against others to better their own circumstances. *For more information:* uprisingsupport.org

comrades. He is a father, an artist, and an avid lover of the outdoors. He enjoys reading books and zines on history, art, politics, and nature.

Alex Stokes — On January 6, 2021, right-wing agitators gathered outside the New York State Capitol in support of the Stop the Steal rally in Washington DC. A handful of counter protesters spoke out against them and a melee broke out after a Proud Boy tased a Black man in the neck. Alex Stokes was watching from the sidelines and ran to help others. Police did not intervene until the violence had ended, arresting three Black activists. Alex was charged with several felonies. The Proud Boys were not arrested at the scene. Alex's family and friends maintain that he was railroaded by the system. He was a journalist under a court-ordered gag-order for over a year. His previous work and experience with dangerous hate groups were inadmissible for his defense, but the prosecution picked apart his social media accounts and portrayed his actions as premeditated. He was found guilty on all charges and sentenced to 20 years in prison, despite the fact that no one died and neither of the victims received life-altering injuries.

Gage Halopowski — an antifascist political prisoner from Portland, OR who was arrested while countering a far-right demonstration in June 2019. In November 2019, Gage was convicted and sentenced to six years in state prison. Gage released in November 2023.

Uprising Support — starting in May 2020 the U.S. was shaken by protests, uprisings, and riots following the police murder of George Floyd. Almost immediately the government moved in to repress those taking the streets against the police and racial violence. More than 350 people were arrested on federal charges while city and state level arrests topped 14,000 between May 28th and Nov 3rd. Some cities/regions already had established organizations and crews to help with both jail support and long-term prisoner support during and after the Uprising; in other places new groups formed as the need arose; yet other places still have little or no infrastructure to support the massive number of arrestees. The uprising was the continuation of a battle against the combined powers of the state and white supremacy that has been raging for decades; centuries. That fight does not end when the protests die down or the riots are quelled. It overlaps with other moments of rupture and with the care that we show for each other in the aftermath of repression and the build up towards the next moment. The struggle continues. And for that reason, we do not want those captured by the state to be isolated through their imprisonment and left out of that continuing struggle. We want to facilitate their connections with people, movements, and communities on the outside; this website is one piece of that effort. This site is run by a few people who have both interest in and experience with running support campaigns and doing anti-repression education and organizing. We are not ourselves an organization and we rely primarily on the work and support of those on the ground in each of these places who already

assault with an object, the object being my shoe. I wasn't wearing Nazi-stomping steel toe boots, I was wearing a lightweight mesh-top running sneaker, and that counts as an object. I could have hit him with a brick, and it would have been the same charge.

All that to say, I know it's a little complicated, but the charges that they throw at you could be any number of things. They want to justify their use of force. They want to justify why they picked you, when really there's no reason, they just picked somebody. They saw dudes in suits and dudes in black bloc, and they're like, "I'm gonna arrest one of those dudes in black bloc." What I ended up taking a non-cooperating plea to was attempted gang assault and assault with an instrument. That got me 18 months. I served 12. I was actually in 12.

Eric King: I was arrested in 2014 after throwing Molotov cocktails at a congressman's office in Kansas City. I had gone to Ferguson to participate in the uprising. I was there for a couple days and a night. When I came back into the city, no one in Kansas City was really open to direct action, or at least no one that I knew. We had our little tiny affinity group and got to work. When that wasn't really raising the temperature in Kansas City, like raising awareness for action and solidarity with those in Ferguson, I decided to try to take it one step further. I was charged with—kind of how you were hit with the weapon thing because it was your shoe—I was charged with possession of an incendiary device, using an incendiary device, using an incendiary device against a government building, and then possession of an incendiary device in a government building. It's all the same, like it's all one thing. You threw a fucking bottle.

David Campbell: Yeah. They also seem incompatible, like you can't be possessing it, using it inside the building, attacking the… But they could stack charges, right? Ridiculous.

Eric King: It was a 15-year mandatory minimum. We ended up taking the non-snitch plea—or 30 years minimum—we took the non-snitch plea, got it down to just the one charge with a mandatory minimum of 10 years. I ended up doing nine years and five or four months of that sentence. Seven and a half of that was in solitary, was in the shoe, or ADX, and I'm happy to be here.

Alissa Azar: We're very happy that you're both out. Follow-up for both of

y'all, what was the security level of the facilities that you were in? What facilities were you in, like jail versus prison? Can you kind of expand on your experiences there?

David Campbell: I'm pretty nit-picky in stuff that I write about not using the terms jail or prison interchangeably, but here, just so we're all aware, orally, it doesn't bother me nearly as much, just because that's how people talk. Technically, I didn't go to prison. I went to jail, right, but talking about being an anti-fascist in prison, I'm not going to say, "I'm not going to that panel because that's wrong," you know. But technically, I didn't go to prison, I've never been to prison. Jail guys, like if you're in jail, there's a lot of guys who've been in and out of jail for years for little tiny petty crimes, you know, like boosters, right, guys who are addicted to a hard drug, they steal stuff here and there, and they go in for a couple days, a couple weeks, whatever, over the years, never been in prison, right, so it's a very different culture.

Security level kind of varies according to housing unit. I was in Rikers island. It's an island with a bunch of different facilities, right, and you have high security buildings and units within buildings on Rikers. Where I was, I was among sentenced men. Everybody's doing 16 months max, that's the longest you can do: 16 months. People doing 16 months are pretty rare. I had a long sentence at 18 months. I was doing 12. Doing 12 months is pretty long by those standards. There's different security levels within that, but in general people kind of behave, right, because if you're not an idiot, you'll see the street again pretty soon. Then you have a security classification level. That's given to you based on this intake interview they do. You can or can't get outside work clearance, you can or can't get into certain programs and stuff, depending on your security level, right?

Rikers is generally medium, like the population I was in, and in a population where people behave. It's a very different ball game from prison. I think Eric probably had a very different experience, because, for one, he went to actual prison. Eric, you want to take that?

Eric King: Yeah. I'm interested also. There's a followup question I'm going to have for you—you can answer it when I'm done—about whether or not the conditions are better for the sentenced people at Rikers than for the non-sentenced people. I'd be interested to know that.

Los Macheteros — the Ejército Popular Boricua ("Boricua Popular/People's Army"), also known as Los Macheteros ("The Machete Wielders"), is a clandestine militant and insurgent organization based in Puerto Rico which struggles for the independence of Puerto Rico from the United States. During their first decade of existence, they had an average of two actions per year, including the 1978 bombing of a small power station in San Juan, the 1979 retaliation attacks against the United States armed forces personnel, and the 1981 Muñiz Air National Guard Base attack. Boricua Popular Army was led primarily by former fugitive Filiberto Ojeda Ríos who was assassinated by the FBI in 2005. His killing was termed "an illegal killing" by the Government of Puerto Rico's Comisión de Derechos Civiles (Civil Rights Commission) after a seven-year investigation. The name Machetero was symbolically adopted from the Puerto Ricans guerrillas who assembled to defend Puerto Rico from the invading United States Army during the Spanish–American War in 1898.

Emma Goldman — a revolutionary anarchist and political philosopher in first half of the 20th century. Born in Lithuania (then within the Russian Empire), to an Orthodox Jewish family, Goldman immigrated to the United States in 1885 and became attracted to anarchism after the Haymarket massacre. Emma became a writer and a renowned lecturer on anarchist philosophy and women's rights, attracting crowds of thousands. Emma and anarchist writer Alexander Berkman, her lover and lifelong friend, planned to assassinate industrialist and financier Henry Clay Frick as an act of propaganda of the deed. Frick survived the attempt on his life in 1892, and Alexander was sentenced to 22 years in prison. Emma was imprisoned several times in the years that followed, for "inciting to riot" and illegally distributing information about birth control. In 1906, Goldman founded the anarchist journal Mother Earth. In 1917, Emma and Alexander were sentenced to two years in jail for conspiring to "induce persons not to register" for the newly instated draft. After their release from prison, they were arrested—along with 248 others—in the so-called Palmer Raids during the First Red Scare and deported to Russia in December 1919, where they witnessed the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Emma left the Soviet Union after the Kronstadt Rebellion, and in 1923 published a book about her experiences, *My Disillusionment in Russia*. While living in England, Canada, and France, she wrote an autobiography called *Living My Life*. After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Goldman traveled to Spain to support the anarchist revolution there. She died in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in 1940, aged 70.

Jesse "Tall Can" Cannon — an antifascist prisoner who is serving a five-year sentence for two different cases. The first centers around militant community defense in so-called San Diego, Kumeyaay land, against a force of well-known fascists (proud boys and american guard) on January 9th, 2021. The second case he caught while he was fulfilling a support role for the historical Chicano Park community a short while later. TC has deep ties to his local community and a long history of engaging in struggle for its defense alongside his friends and

People, Places, Events, & Organizations

Assata Shakur — a Black revolutionary and a member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) who escaped from prison and lives free as a maroon in Cuba. Assata became involved with Civil Rights protests while in community college in New York City in the mid-60's. After graduating from CCNY, she moved to Oakland, California, where she joined the Black Panther Party (BPP), working with the party to organize protests and community education programs. After returning to New York City, Assata led the BPP chapter in Harlem, coordinating the Free Breakfast for Children program, free clinics, and community outreach. Assata joined the BLA, an offshoot of the BPP whose members were inspired by Third World liberation struggles, engaging in guerilla warfare against the U.S. government for Black liberation. On May 2, 1973, Assata, along with Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli, were involved in a shootout with the police, during which Zayd was killed and Assata was wounded. After Assata's capture, between 1973 and 1977 she was indicted ten times, resulting in seven different criminal trials. On November 2, 1979, Assata, after six years of imprisonment (where she birthed her daughter, Kakuya Shakur), escaped the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in New Jersey when three members of the Black Liberation Army visiting her drew concealed .45-caliber pistols and a stick of dynamite, seized two correction officers as hostages, commandeered a van and (with the assistance of members of the May 19 Communist Organization) made their escape. Despite one of the largest police and FBI manhunts in history, Assata made her way to Cuba, where she has continued to reside to this day. Assata is the author of the books *Assata: An Autobiography*, *Still Black, Still Strong*, with Dhoruba bin Wahad and Mumia Abu-Jamal, and many articles and poems.

Alfredo Bonanno — an Italian anarchist, recognized as a prominent theorist and proponent of contemporary insurrectionary anarchism. Alfredo emerged from a tendency within Italian anarchism that emphasized direct action, informal affinity groups, and expropriation for financing anarchist activity. Alfredo was imprisoned many times, including for his book *Armed Joy*, and was one of hundreds of Italian anarchists arrested on the night of June 19, 1997, when Italian security forces carried out raids on anarchist centres all over Italy. He was accused of being the ideologist of the group called ORAI (Insurrectionist Anarchist Revolutionary Organization), which had carried out several self-financing robberies, demonstration attacks, and a kidnapping. Of the 68 defendants in the trial, which was seen by the anarchist community as a set-up, only 7 were found guilty. In 2003 Bonanno was sentenced again to 6 years in prison. He was released due to his age in 2010 and passed away on December 6, 2023. An extraordinarily influential anarchist theorist, some of his writings include, *The Anarchist Tension*, *And We Will Still Be Ready To Storm The Heavens Another Time*, *Armed Joy*, *From Riot to Insurrection*, and *Worker's Autonomy*.

I was in the feds. I was in the federal system, and in the feds there's four custody levels. There's low, medium, penitentiary, supermax. I don't even count camps. I don't even list them. If you don't have a fence, I don't count it. I was in all four. I think there's only been seven people ever to do that in the BOP. I was able to work my way up to a medium, work my way up to a penitentiary, and then work my way up to the supermax. I got to experience everything that the BOP has to offer, and it's a nightmare. I cannot stress enough how horrible the bureau of prisons is. This isn't, it's not like you hear about "Club Fed" and that shit, like maybe for the camps that exist, but I did seven years in the shoe, and four of that I didn't have radio, phone calls, books, magazines, newspapers. If you resist in the BOP, you get crushed. I experienced that. I felt that.

This is a lighthearted, fun talk, but I do want everyone listening to understand that they go after you, and they go after your family. They abused my wife when she'd come to visit me. They taunted and tried to pick fights with my kids. I had little five-year-olds. These dudes are full-throttle pieces of shit that want to hurt us. And they do. I don't even know if I answered your question.

But I do want to know about whether or not there are different qualities, and how you're treated per sentence or not sentence.

David Campbell: For one, I was never detained on Rikers, I was never in pre-trial detention on Rikers, so I can't speak to that from personal experience. I was in two different buildings. I started off in C76—if anyone knows Rikers buildings, I was in the six. Then I was in the four, C74. After about two and a half months, they moved me to the four, and I spent most of my bid there. The six is dedicated, or was at the time, entirely to sentenced men, so people serving what they call "city time," 16 months or less. When I was moved to the four, there are certain units for people serving "city time," serving a sentence of 16 months or less, but the other units are guys who are in pre-trial detention. You wear different color uniforms. It's very clear who's serving a city sentence, who's serving city time, and who's pre-trial. You're not in the same housing unit, but you will go to the yard with other housing units, and they might have pre-trial detainees. We call them "tans." They call us "greens." You wear green, they wear tan.

You see tans in the hallway, in the clinic, you might have a job... Like I

worked in the kitchen, I worked alongside a bunch of tan guys for months. You went to the yard with them, you know, stuff like that, visits, the visiting room, where you're waiting to go out on the floor, you're changing clothes... You spend time with these guys that are in pre-trial detention. I got much more of an idea what life was like for them than I had in the six, just mingling with them. They have it harder. Some of those guys, like they might be in for something really petty, they might be in for parole violation, but other guys, they might have committed a really serious crime, and they might know that their goose is cooked, and they're going to go away for a long time, so they're already invested in prison culture, more than they are keeping their eyes on the street, you know, getting back to the street, the way we are. For sure, I mean it's a survival thing. It makes total sense.

There's very much a cultural difference between pre-trial detainees and "city time" inmates. We call ourselves "inmates." I know it's kind of a loaded word, but that's what everybody says. "City time" prisoners. If I say that it's not because I'm a boot-licker. I don't even know. The word "inmate" in prison has serious connotations as opposed to "convict." I didn't even know that until it was eight months into my bid. A guy who had served time upstate was like, "You know upstate we don't say the word inmate, right?"

Eric King: In the feds if someone calls you an inmate it means you're a fucking narc, and you need to get to work. Very serious accusation.

David Campbell: Yeah, but we just say "inmate," like incarcerated person. During the George Floyd Rebellion, one dude was like, "Inmates need to be turning it up for Brianna Taylor!" You could you say inmate in that way, and it's clear that, because it's such a radical context, it just means prisoner. But, yeah, there's a big cultural difference. To just put a button on that, "city time" is very interesting because it is—again speaking as a guy who's never been in pre-trial detention and never been in prison—very distinct from both of those experiences. Based on talking to other guys and just living through the "city time" experience, in prison you have more, in general, you have more amenities. I think if you're doing time in the shoe—I mean, I'm interested to hear your thoughts on this—but guys who had been upstate, including all security levels, were like, "People take the prisoner code more seriously there." There's more of like a set of rules about what you do and don't do in front of people. It's considered

stuff like that, if you're looking to get involved. *uprisingsupport.org,* as well, for people that are doing time for stuff related to the George Floyd Rebellion. If you don't know where to get started, and you want some people to write a letter or a postcard to, because that is a really easy way to brighten somebody's day.

Eric King: This movement cannot win and cannot exist if we don't support those who go away for it.

Alissa Azar: Amen.

David Campbell: Yeah, for sure.

Eric King: Libertie, great seeing you.

Libertie Valance: Thanks, ya'll.

Eric King: Gage was released, by the way. I just got a text about it.

David Campbell: Oh, really? Sweet! Welcome home, Gage.

Libertie Valance: This was an incredible conversation. It really blew me away. I know that folks were really appreciating everything ya'll were sharing. We've got a wrap for tonight, but so much appreciation to all of y'all. So glad that y'all are both out now. We got to get more people out! Alissa, thank you for being a fantastic moderator.

Eric King: Thanks, Alissa, I really appreciate you, friend.

Alissa Azar: Thank you so much for having us, and it was great talking to everybody.

Libertie Valance: Have a great night, y'all.

for yourself. “All right, so this is what I need to do.” That was kind of the approach that was helpful for me. I would also say that if you’re going to learn about what life is like in there, try to focus on the actual facility you’ll be going to, and, if you don’t know, then it’s probably going to do more harm than good, because there’s just so much… A lot of bad shit happens in jail and prison, but that stuff does tend to float to the top.

Eric King: If you’re preparing for USP and you go to a low, you’re going to look ridiculous if you go in there trying to be a tough guy.

David Campbell: It’s completely different. I was getting ready to go to Rikers, which is reputed to be this horrible place, and, look, it sucks, but I’m among sentenced men, city time guys, not detainees. It’s like, “Well, we’re all going home pretty soon…” People fight over dumb stuff, disrespect, whatever, but they’re not stabbing each other and pulling each other’s intestines out… [*Laughter*.]

Eric King: I just want to tell anyone watching that doesn’t already know me or Smiles, please write Randy Platt in ADX. He’s got 14 more years there. He’s already done five. He’s my best friend. This is my best friend. He saved my life multiple times. The cops tried to send him into my cell to kill me, offering rewards to him, and instead he wrote my lawyers, telling them, “This is what the cops are doing to set Eric up, you guys need to know this shit.” There’s a thousand instances like that. So, please support my homie, Randy Platt. It’s on my Instagram @supportericking, but please write my homie, Smiles.

David Campbell: That’s great. I would actually like to mention some political prisoners real quick too.

Jesse “Tall Can” Cannon started a five year sentence in California state. He’s an anti-fascist political prisoner.

Eric King: Great guy.

David Campbell: Alex Stokes, he’s doing 20 years in New York State. He’s waiting on an appeal, but his sentence is completely ridiculous. Gage Halupowski, he’s probably near the end of his six years in Oregon state. You could find these guys on the Anarchist Black Cross website: *abcf.net*. There’s *prisonersolidarity.com*. International anti-fascist defense fund,

disrespectful to do this, that, or the other. There’s more of a code. There’s more stuff to do, like upstate New York you could get groceries sent in from the street, you could have a guitar, a typewriter, you know, cigarettes, whatever.

Eric King: What?!

David Campbell: Yeah, it doesn’t sound bad.

Eric King: Good for them.

David Campbell: Rikers, you don’t have any of that. Unlike pre-trial detention, which is like, “Well, I got a court date next week, maybe I’ll get out,” or “I’m already invested in the 20 years I think I’m going to do,” when you’re in “city time,” it’s like, “Well, I only have eight months, but god fucking damn it, I got nothing to do. I mean, I had friends inside that had served serious time in state prison, mostly, you know, in their youth, and a lot of them say things like, “This time is going slower than the decade I did when I was a young man. This is just insufferable.” I’ve never been incarcerated anywhere else, but, anyway, that’s a long answer to your short question. There are important cultural and psychological differences. I don’t know if there’s a big difference in terms of comfort level, but, yeah, culturally it’s a big difference.

Alissa Azar: I think something a lot of people don’t realize until they go through the experience themselves is how much stress and anxiety and just the feelings that come with what you experience upon being indicted, and I’m curious how you both handled your prosecution and your defense and that time period leading up into, you know, before you got locked up.

Eric King: I’ll go first on this one. I’ve been indicted twice. The first one I was bouncing around houses trying to hide from the feds. They found me, arrested me outside my friend’s apartment. I did 16 months of pre-trial detention. I was inside pre-trial. It’s scary. It’s scary as shit, because you don’t have resources to fight your case when you’re inside. You have no idea when stuff’s going to happen, and your lawyers are not answering their phones, they are not helping you, because they’re so swamped. The public defender system in the feds is so overwhelmed, like these people care, but they can’t do anything. It’s mentally exhausting, and it wears you

out. People end up wanting to take plea deals that are horrendous because they're just so tired.

I was at CCA, the private pre-trial facility. It's the worst food you've ever had in your life. Worst bed you've ever had in your life. Most expensive phone calls. Commissary, $5 for a bag of shitty-ass Keefe [*commissary company*].

David Campbell: This is crazy.

Eric King: That was brutal. The second time I was indicted, I was inside the feds. I was still in prison, so I'm having to fight this case from within the shoe now for assaulting this officer, surrounded by this officer's comrades. They're stealing mail, interrupting legal calls, interrupting legal visits. I got put on a full communication ban for a couple years. I can't even talk to my wife and kids about shit. They do this on purpose, of course, to destroy our spirits and to make their job easier. They told me this. They said, "If you plead guilty right now, we'll get you out. We'll get you out of this. We'll get you to your next spot." The only plea deal they offered was 20 years. The next spot would have been 20 years in the supermax and ADX. If you refuse, and you fight your case, and take it to trial, they make it as hard as possible. I think it's something like 96% of people in the feds take a plea deal, and of the four that go to trial 96% lose, because they make it so insurmountable to wage a real fight for yourself.

I was one of the lucky few that won a trial against the feds, but it's exhausting, it's scary, it's sad. You feel hopeless at times. If you make it out on the other side, you feel really blessed.

David Campbell: Can I ask a quick rebound question on that? Which was harder for you, if you had to pick one? The first indictment when you were still free, your first indictment before you've been away, and you're wondering like... Because you're facing significant amounts of time for both, right?

Eric King: 30 and 20.

David Campbell: And then, the other 20, you're already in, you're close to the end of your bid, I think you're at the three quarters mark? You're in the shoe, that kind of sucks, but you're like, "All right, I got this number of

yourself be a victim. Obviously have support going in. Have a book list. Have people you trust. Have money ready if you can, if you are privileged to do that. But, please, for the love of god, do not enter into this jungle and think that you're above it, because I did that for a little bit, and it's stupid. It's stupid as shit. Do not let yourself be a victim.

David Campbell: That's great advice. I would say all that, and then to round that out, maybe just try to keep as cool a head as possible while you're facing charges, because it's so hard to do that. That's the pre-advice. Learn, but you can do that at the same time that you prepare to go away. If you're like, "I think I might have to go away," all right, well, that is terrifying. It was terrifying for me, but I was able to kind of pull that off to where I was like, "All right, I'm going to do at least a year, maybe two," you know, towards the end of my plea deal situation, so I was like, "All right, cool." I was talking to people in my defense committee, and they got a domain for a website. We have a spreadsheet setup that we can use to organize visits, so that you don't have people double-booking, fighting for spots.

Eric King: Doing that ahead of time, that's amazing.

David Campbell: It was insane. I had people put me in touch with a therapist, a radical therapist. I would say, absolutely get a radical therapist or a therapist who understands.

Eric King: I get free EMDR treatment. I recommend it.

David Campbell: I had people show up in so many ways. Teaching me meditation techniques, I had a couple different people teach me ways to try to get into my own head and chill out even in very busy environments. I had people teach me self-defense. One guy who had done prison time was like, "You don't want to do that in there. It's not going to work out. The guy's gonna come back the next day, if you just kick him in the balls." That was very helpful. Anything like that you can get that's practical is actually a way of coping. For me it was a way of coping with anxiety. "I have to do time." That's absurd. We all deal with these things. You wake up one day, and one of your parents has a cancer diagnosis, and you're like, "This means I'm going to spend a lot of time in hospitals, and it's going to be really hard." But you find a way to do that, and you work it in your schedule practically, mentally. There's ways to create some distance

Eric King: When I was allowed books, yeah.

David Campbell: I got so many books. Within a month I had to ask people to stop sending them because I had too many. I was giving them away at an alarming rate.

Eric King: That's one of the best feelings, when someone says, "Oh, man, I wish I had this book," and you ask a friend, and they hook it up in three days. "Here you go." Because that person is probably not going to get a single bit of kindness, and all of a sudden you get to pass that solidarity on. It's a beautiful feeling.

David Campbell: It's a wonderful thing. Actually, the Haitian dude I was talking about earlier wanted a dictionary so he could work on his English grammar, and he was like, "Yeah, we just don't have any old dictionaries lying around." I had a giant French-English dictionary, but I needed it all day, and it was not what he needed, and I just asked my defense committee to order a dictionary from a used bookstore and send it to me. It's just a little gesture, you know. Yeah, man, it's pretty cool. Getting letters, man... Sometimes it doesn't even matter what the content is. It could just be a postcard. Damn, it's awesome.

Eric King: To everyone sending out books and letters to prisoners, thank you so much. Send a book today. My friend, Smiles, he needs books. He needs adult coloring books. Randy Platt, ADX. He's finally allowed colored pencils.

Alssa Azar: The last question is do you have any advice for activists who are either currently facing incarceration or who are currently maybe taking risks that could put them in that position?

Eric King: I said this before, and people don't always like this answer, but, firstly, understand the consequence of what you're doing, that it can lead to this. If it does lead to this, then you need to know that you better be prepared for violence. If you're going to a penitentiary or a high medium, do not think that you're above it all. Do not think that you're a pacifist or whatever. Learn to fight. Learn to make knives. Learn defense. Learn how to tackle people or do MMA. Be prepared so that you are not a victim. We are still within this horrible system, and I have seen people go and be like, "Oh, I'm not a part of it," and they leave without their teeth. Do not let

days left, whatever, and I'm out of here."

Eric King: The second one.

David Campbell: The second one was harder?

Eric King: Because I've got a future now. I've got my wife. I got kids. I got a job lined up. I've got plans to get out. Now all of a sudden they're saying, "Well, we'd actually like to give you 20 more years." Two times in the feds is so hard. I wasn't just like, "Well, I got this many days." It was, "I hope I make it to tomorrow." It was a fucking nightmare, the second one. The first one, I knew I was going to prison. I chose it.

David Campbell: Right. Yeah. At a certain point, you're just like, "All right. Cool. This is the path I'm on. I got to put my seat belt on and roll with it." I never had a second indictment or anything like that, but there was a moment during Covid, because the year that I did was Covid year. I was in for four months when Covid hit, and there was a moment where people were getting out *en masse*, and I wasn't one of them. I was in constant communication my lawyer who's putting pressure on the DA, Mayor's office, DOC. I had call-in campaigns. It looked like I was maybe getting out, and then at a moment it became clear that it just wasn't going to happen, and so I had to remake my peace. "All right. Cool. So I'm getting out in October." Again, I didn't do that much time in the big picture, but I just know that feeling of like, "Okay, I have this date, I can make it there... Oh, wait. I could be out of here tomorrow?"

Eric King: The carrot. They dangled it. The hope.

David Campbell: It's very difficult to manage. I think, to tie that into a response to the initial question about handling the indictment, handling the case. For me, because I had plans that I was really very much looking forward to right at the time of my arrest. I was already going to move out of the states. I was in a relationship that I was looking to take to the next level. I had a lot of plans, things I was very much looking forward to. And then this kind of happened, and it's kind of like, well, I chose to go out there, but also I didn't expect it to go this way. I spent a lot of time feeling very sorry for myself. I was super anxious. I was super stressed. I was drinking way too much, smoking way too much weed. I didn't know what else to do. I was trying to stay motivated and productive, because I

realized that that was a good sort of defense against it, but at a certain point you just don't have the energy. I could draw a list of the things in my life that I felt like were like crumbling before me, and that was harder in a lot of ways than really even just being in there and going through it, because it's so uncertain.

It just feels so nefarious, being in the hands of idiots who are feeding you shitty food while you all wear monochromatic uniforms. It's like, "All right. Well, this sucks and looks like the real world in *The Matrix* or something. It's fun." It feels so malicious when people are targeting you, creating things on paper that are blatantly false and really nasty and could have a huge impact on your life. It feels like, "This is fucked up. How do these people sleep?"

Eric King: How *do* these people sleep?

David Campbell: That's a complicated question. Some of them are just straight psychopaths, but a lot of them see it very differently.

The time that I was watching my case kind of draw to a close and increasingly becoming aware that it would probably end in incarceration was super hard, and in some ways harder than my time actually in. One thing that was helpful is working with a great radical therapist who never asked me for a dime, treated me out of solidarity alone, had worked with other incarcerated people. What was really helpful was: Write down everything you're worried about losing. Write down every bad thing that could happen if you go away. On an index card write down every neutral thing that could happen, and every good thing that could happen. And then we're going to lay them out in order, and we're going to flip them over, and take some notes and build those up a little bit. I still have that deck of index cards where from worst to best it's things that could happen if I go away. In October I will have been out for four years. I picked that up and looked at it the other day, and it seems surreal.

Eric King: You've been out for four years?

David Campbell: Almost, yeah, in October.

Eric King: Time gets real weird when you're inside. When I think of you, I remember when I heard about your situation in the ABC newsletter, and got out, and you started texting me once you got out. I like writing letters.

Eric King: I can't stress to people listening enough: You can save someone's life with mail. You can build a relationship that changes your entire existence in a good way through letters. I've always encouraged people to write my bro in ADX. I sent out 150 letters to him last week from people, because that can be the difference between him feeling so alone, so sad, so forgotten, and feeling like, "Damn, I'm going to get out of here. I have a future." Please, please write prisoners. Please, for the love of God, write anyone. If you want names, come holler at me.

David Campbell: That's about the size of it. The letters matter so much. They're the sign of the solidarity that you're getting. There are lots of other signs, like you have money on your books that people go out of their way to put in. Your visiting calendar is always full, stuff like that. But the mail is really incredible. It's really hard to describe. It's one of the hardest things to describe. I got, I think it was, 21 letters, a calendar, and three books my first day in. I started crying in the hallway. Not my first day, but the first day I got mail. I was a week in, because it takes some time to catch up. I was like, "Man, thankfully there's nobody there."

I was so moved and was so surprised by how moving it was to get a bunch of letters. People who took the time…

Eric King: Took the time! You can't accidentally send a letter. It's not like clicking 'like' on the internet. You have to put in work. You're saying that this person is worth it. You're worth that time, that work, and that means a lot. I take that seriously.

David Campbell: It could easily go the other way, and like, "It would be easier for me in my life out here on the outside to move on and not worry about it and not take the time." It's mentally draining. I'm invested in this person's life. I can't understand a lot of things, because the world when you're locked up is very different. It's kind of like a commitment to a relationship. It's daunting. So, when people are like, "Yeah, I've made the decision to do that." And then you receive those letters inside. It's pretty incredible.

People sent you a lot of books and stuff, I assume, right?

to have a fair one, and that's what they do.

David Campbell: That's kind of an old school thing, too. I have the impression it's not really very common anymore, but you used to be able to go into the pantry with the cop that you have beef with and just fight, and then it's resolved. Whatever the issue was, we let it be after that. There are cops there, like, man, I really wish it was a thing, and I really wish I wasn't worried about extending my stay here, because it's pretty short, and I got a life to get back to, but, yeah, there are people… You're a piece of shit. You're lording it over other people in really petty ways, and, yeah, I would love to punch you in the face. [*Laughter.*]

Eric King: What's the next question?

Alissa Azar: I'll start with this one. Before, you talked about how it was very alienating being an anti-fascist, and you touched a little bit on the significance of getting letters when you were in prison. Can you talk a little bit more in detail about what it's like to be getting communication from the outside world and the effects that it has when you are in a situation like that?

Eric King: I did it both ways. When I first came in, I didn't have any support. Denver ABC, if it wasn't for them, who knows when I would have started getting letters. I went through a period of mass amounts of letters, and then a mail ban where I wasn't allowed letters, where they would just send them back. I wasn't allowed mail. The difference is… How do I put this? When you get letters from people that really care about you, it can be the best part of your week. It can be the difference between wanting to hang up and wanting to do burpees and smile and laugh and joke. I met my wife through letters. I got my job through letters. Every friend I have right now in my life except for like four or five still in Kansas City are people that wrote me. Josh Davidson, who I edited *Rattling the Cages* with, he's a friend from letters. He wrote me letters when I was in the shoe at Leavenworth. These are real relationships that can be built.

David wrote me. That's how we became friends.

David Campbell: I was just about to say that! Because I knew about your case before I went away, I think you heard about mine while you were in, but the reason we're talking today is because I started writing you after I

that feels like goddamn yesterday. It does not feel like four years ago. That's crazy. Good for you.

David Campbell: I'm glad to be here.

Alissa Azar: If at all, how did your experiences inside inform your radical politics? How, if at all, has it changed from before and after? I don't know if you have any examples or specific issues you could use as an example.

Eric King: When I got locked up, I considered myself an Alfredo Bonanno insurrectionist type anarchist. There was a level of pedanticism to it.

David Campbell: I love the specificity of that, I'm sorry. Like, "What are your beliefs?" "Well, I'm an Alfredo Bonanno insurrectionary anarchist."

Eric King: As I said, very pedantic. We were up our own asses thinking we understood exactly how to topple this system, and it was through political direct action and violence and all this jazz. That was the foundation of my anarchism. It was based on toppling that system as opposed to the system in here [*pointing to his head*]. When I got locked up, over the years people showered me in books and articles, when I was allowed to get them, and you start developing a broader scope of how you view hierarchy, and how you view power, domination. I got to see the worst of the worst. For real, I got to meet people that were held in 24-hour lockdown for 20 years. They can't resist that way. So, how can we resist? What does resistance mean when they take away everything you have? That helped really to change me, because it modified my anarchism and my radicalism to be about kindness. It changed it to where, instead of wanting to tear things down, I wanted to build things up. I want to build a community around me to where the people practice mutual aid, practice solidarity, practice looking out for each other, because people did that for me, and I did that inside prison, too. I really tried to look out for those around me, whether they were pieces of shit or not, because I don't want to be an additional chain. I don't want to be another chain wrapped around your fucking neck.

My wife really helped me understand radical vulnerability, that it's okay to feel. If you're just saying this shit's easy and it doesn't hurt, then prison's not that bad. It's okay to let people know that you are hurting and to open your heart up to them to help you emotionally and physically. When I did that, it allowed me to be there for people that way. It allowed

me to start seeing struggles differently. So, my anarchism and my radicalism now is: I don't ever want to be someone's warden. I don't ever want to be that prison guard saying, "You can't have this. You can't do that. You can't say this." I want to be someone that people can talk to, be open with, someone that is there to help and wants to build the communities that are so strong we don't need government. We don't need their bullshit, because we take care of we. The old Black dudes always used to say—what did they say?—"We got we." We all we got. We're it. If we're not going to look out for each other, who else is? That's how my radicalism developed into: I want to be able to cry with you and help you when you're crying, and let's see what we can't do together. That's what prison did to me, or what I allowed myself to develop into while inside.

David Campbell: That was an incredible answer with a lot of really, really great detail and texture to it. I don't really know how to follow that up. I wasn't really that involved in the anarchist or antifascist scene when I got arrested. I was doing a little bit here and there. Since 2016 I had been in anarchist circles. Anti-fascism is just a staple of left politics in general, especially anarchism. Anti-fascism, are you out of your mind? Of course. After Trump came to power, and there's a lot of people being like, "Yeah, man. Somebody should really do something." It sounds over-simplistic, but I'm in a position where I know where I can meet like-minded people who are probably going to be down to take action. I know what the risks are. I think I know why this is necessary. I'm also aware that it's not the only thing. When I say, "it" and "this," I mean radical anti-fascist action that entails, largely, surveilling or confronting fascists, making it impossible for them to organize and have a public life. That seems like no big deal. That's not the only way to do it, but I think it's important. On the one hand, it's quite glamorized. On the other hand, a lot of people don't want to touch it because it's like, man, it could get gnarly real fast. It can. It did for me. I got unlucky and ended up going away for it. But at the time, I wasn't super involved, and I was never a person who put their politics at the center of their world-view. I still wouldn't consider myself that way. I know what my politics are, I think, and I'm still open to discovering more about who I am in terms of my political worldview. I have a lot of different things....

My reading list, the books that I wanted to read when I was in, was all over the map. I even got a letter from some random person who was like, "I really appreciate that you weren't just like, 'I want to read Assata Shakur's

But I'm much more... Like, I don't want to be your friend. You know, even the guy that asked me to roll up my sleeves who was my supervisor in the kitchen, he over time ended up being very sympathetic to a lot of things that we were talking about. He knew about my case. He looked it up. He wanted to learn about it. He wasn't prying. He wasn't, like, asking me, "Where's the rebel base?" He was just like, "So why do anti-fascists care about Black Lives Matter" when the George Floyd stuff popped, like wanted to have that conversation. I was happy to have that with him, but in a place where other people can see us chatting, and we chat for a couple minutes, and then I'm like, "I got to go over here," because I got something to do.

You know what? He did ask me to snitch once in a moment where it looked like nobody was around, and it wasn't a big thing, it was very minor, we had already built up a rapport, and I was shocked and disappointed that he asked me that. He wasn't petty about it afterwards. He didn't take any of my books away. My last day was the same day as one of his co-workers having a retirement party. He went to the retirement party, took a piece of cake, brought it to me. Shit like that. It's a rapport. It's a rapport. You can have that. I'm okay with that. But I'm more partial to the sort of world you're describing, where there's a distinction there, right? Because we're not on the same team. Even if for you it's just a job, well, lots of people have rationalized lots of bad shit by saing, "It's just job." It's not. It's just not. You're keeping people in boxes for what a plumber makes. I mean not that it would be better if it was a lot of money...

Eric King: I've got five staff assaults on my jacket, from pre-trial to getting out. I wish I had 10. [*Laughter.*] I wish I had 20, because the brutality of these pieces of shit in the feds...

David Campbell: Feel that.

Eric King: ...makes me shake. Alissa, you got me shaking with rage.

David Campbell: There are cops that I met in there that I would like to have... They talk about "shooting a fair one." I don't know if that's a thing that...

Eric King: They don't do "fair ones," these motherfuckers. I was supposed

mentality. So, people who are getting locked up from the same neighborhoods as them for, you know, dealing small amounts of drugs or having a gun in a neighborhood where everyone has a gun, some of them have a very developed prisoner code sort of mentality, where it's us and them, cops versus criminals, which I'm more partial to. But there's definitely a lot of crossover, where it's like, "That's my cousin's sister-in-law, and I see her at the barbecue every year, and she used to work in a warehouse, and she started doing this because she wanted a decent job." That's the shit you kind of hear floating around at Rikers, which I think makes it a little distinct from a lot of other prisons. I don't know how it stacks up against jails, but I would bet that a lot of local jail facilities are more like that, I think.

Eric King: Where my machismo stuff hasn't faded is my intense vitriol for all these cops. The idea or even just the thought of having a casual conversation with one of them makes me want to puke. These bastards... I've been chained to beds. I've been chained for hours. I've been put in a cell with nothing in it with the air conditioner blowing as hard as it can for weeks. I've had mail destroyed. I've had my body destroyed. When I see people associating with these cops, I let those people know, "You're playing a dangerous game." I would talk about this in the shoe with Smiles. These are not our friends. These are not our allies. These are not our comrades. These are not our neighbors. These are people that receive a paycheck to torture us. These are the slave owners that would ride around on the horses with the guns. "They're just doing a job." No, motherfucker. They're not. They chose this life. They chose this.

In the feds they're almost like a militarized occupying force. They're not our neighbors. They're not people from the block. They're people from all over the country that transition in and out, all these old veterans getting their PTSD jobs, and they are abusive. I've met two cops since I've been down, who, if I was in a riot and saw them getting killed, I'd feel bad about. I wouldn't jump in to help them. But I would maybe have empathy, like, "Well, they were a pretty decent guy. Sorry. Sorry about your luck."

David Campbell: I feel that. I see you speak about that, and I see that it's coming from the heart, and it's coming from a place of experience, and I totally get that and respect that. Especially because I'm more partial to drawing a pretty firm line between prisoners and CO's. I never went out of my way to antagonize any CO's, because that didn't seem like a great idea.

biography and Alfred Bonanno.'" It wasn't all radical theory books. It was a lot of random stuff that I enjoy, because, like most people, I think a person who has a lot of different interests and a lot of different....

Eric King: I was more mentally exhausted towards year three through nine getting theory books, like radical books. I wanted to get political prisoner books. I like those books, but when it's all theory coming in, I was like, "Oh my God, can I just read about wizards?"

David Campbell: I want to read about wizards, yeah.

Eric King: Anything! Please.

David Campbell: At a certain point, I was picking up the, like, David Baldacci, grocery store novelists... "This is great. This is just what I need."

To talk about how it changed kind of my politics, it definitely made me think about abolition. Prison abolition, police abolition, they're the same thing, right, two sides of the same thing. Never having been even in the drunk tank before, I'm discovering...

Eric King: Wow!

David Campbell: Yeah, I mean I've done a lot of dumb shit in my life, and I've generally got away with it. A big part of it is just white privilege. The dumb shit that I did when I was very young could get someone sent away, if they're coming from a position where they're in an over-policed community or something, almost certainly. I never dealt with that, and then here I am in jail. Now I'm seeing what this is really like. Abolition, like anti-fascism for me, it's a plank of anarchism. Obviously, sure one day we want to get there, but I hadn't really thought about it much. Now here I am, and I'm like, "Wow, this is so dumb and doesn't work, and we could definitely be doing this in another way, in a better way."

This is right at the time that this sort of discourse enters the mainstream because of the George Floyd Rebellion going on. There's a lot of writing, there's a lot of dialogue about it in the public sphere. I'm far from having everything worked out in terms of being an abolitionist, but that is something that I can unhesitatingly say now. It also made me a lot more sympathetic to the label of criminal or felon and much more skeptical of

cops and prisons in general. I've never liked cops, but just, like, man... I've been through it...

Eric King: I've never been more sure of anything in my life than that prisons aren't what we need. Prison helped me learn that concretely.

David Campbell: That's an important thing, too. You talked about so much good stuff. We would need another talk, because I'd really like to respond to all your points. I'm so glad that you were able to develop, you know, radical empathy and vulnerability in there, because that's super hard. It's a strength, but it's not always feasible. In some situations, it's not the right move. It's a risk to show that you're emoting, right? I feel like I learned a lot about myself in jail, and I think it's a strength to be able to say that. For you, too, Eric, it doesn't mean that it's working, it means that we made something out of it. I don't think it proves anything about incarcerating people...

Eric King: No!

David Campbell: If I had universal basic income, I'd be able to do the same amount of soul-searching. There's no need to lock people up. Personally, I worked some shit out about who I am that is good for me. Also, personally, I was able to focus on writing and translating and have been able to build a bit of a profile as a writer and translator since I got out. All those were things that I seized my time to do, because I knew I was going to do this chunk of time, which wasn't that long, planning on moving forward when I got out, and knowing that I have a record now, you know, I can't get involved in anything that could carry risk again. For me, the political work that I do is now mostly writing stuff. It could be me writing an article or whatever, or it could be me writing to political prisoners, because it's a zero risk way to stay involved. I evolved in a lot of ways, and I think it would be crazy if you didn't.

Alissa Azar: I do have a follow-up question for Eric after your last response, I was curious how it was being able to process emotions inside, I guess, the struggle between expressing yourself openly or keeping things to yourself? From your answer it sounds like you were able to express yourself openly, but I'm just curious about the dynamics of that, and how easy or difficult that was with the community that you had?

CO, so the only other thing you could be is an inmate.

The thing that I think is maybe more specific to local jail facilities is there's quite a lot of crossover in terms of neighborhood ties, even family ties, and sometimes gang ties between the prisoners and staff. A lot of this stuff on Rikers. Some official people have looked into this stuff and been like, "Oh yeah, it's a real problem." There's a lot of people who have family ties, neighborhood ties, or again gang affiliation on Rikers in different color uniforms. Sometimes there's a little fluidity in the rule about not being too 'buddy-buddy' with the cops. There's definitely stuff that will sound alarm bells for people, that would be a red flag. You spend too much time talking to a cop, or you're spending time alone speaking in a language that other people don't understand to a cop in front of other people.

I was trying to practice French in there. Believe it or not, I was shocked I couldn't find any other prisoners who spoke French fluently. I was surprised. There's a lot of people who spoke French Creole, Haitian guys. But Haitian Creole, it's just not the same. I don't speak that language. A couple other French Creole languages, but the only people I met that spoke French there were a couple West African guards. They saw me reading books in French, and they try to talk to me in French. "Yeah, I speak French. I'm reading this book right now. I can't talk to you."

In general, there's kind of like, especially short term, you're getting out soon, there's a sense like, "You know, they're people, too. They're just working this shitty job. It's a good city job. You get full benefits and retirement in 20 years." That's a thing that's been observed kind of going back is that most of the guards on Rikers are working class people of color, right?

Eric King: That's a tricky situation.

David Campbell: I mean, everybody wants a decent job that's not going to disappear. Especially if you read or listen to interviews with former CO's, they will tell you, "Listen, I grew up in the projects. It's the same architects. It's the same people. I'm not scared to walk through here, while a lot of people are, and, frankly, the pay and the benefits are not bad. I started at 22. I finish at 42. It's like being a cop or in the military in terms of that one straight shot, two decades, you're done, you cash in all your chips, and you do something else." A lot of people, that's their

David Campbell: Well, that's interesting. I thought you were going to say right wing.

Eric King: The Jihadi dudes… I met Richard Reed, the shoe bomber. I met different big name terrorist dudes from there and had really interesting conversations with them. The way that they stand on their ethics, the way that they do not… How do I how I put it? They are not apologetic. They believe in their cause, and they are willing to talk about it, stand on it. I found those dudes really interesting.

I also met people that I don't know if we count them as political prisoners, but their communities do. I met Larry Hoover, the head of the GDs.

David Campbell: What is that?

Eric King: Gangster Disciples. He's been in prison for 50 years. He is considered a political prisoner by people in Chicago and people who are familiar with that gang. I met Jeff Fort, he was a bodyguard for Martin Luther King Jr. Now he's in his 80s because he tried buying missiles from Gaddafi. We don't necessarily consider them political prisoners, but they are leaders and political leaders in their communities. I find them wildly interesting to talk to, because they have so much experience, and they've read every book I've ever read. They've been down for 50 years, so they have a lot of wisdom and input, even if it's not like, I don't know, fucking Emma Goldman kind of input, it's still input from their communities, and that's more valuable to me at this point in my life.

Alissa Azar: What were some of the relations between people that were locked up and the guards? How did the prisoners refer to themselves? What terms were used? What were those dynamics? I'm sure you guys are going to have varying experiences.

David Campbell: If I can start on this, I mean, we've already touched on terminology, how it varies between state and federal prisons, and in my experience in jail, I can't say this is true of all jails, but in terms of what you refer to yourself as, 'inmate' is a very strong word. It's really an insult to my understanding in state and federal prisons, but, where I was, some guys who had been upstate would evoke that distinction, but they kind of realized it was a lost cause on Rikers. You can't go around identifying as a convict. People were like, "Okay, but you're locked up, right?" You're not a

Eric King: I don't want it to seem like it just happened, or that yesterday I was this way, but today I'm this way. This was a hard process. I went into prison with a lot of bullshit toxic machismo. I went into prison feeling like everything bad, basically: violence was the answer, fighting is the answer, stabbing is the answer, bombs are the answer. That reflected on what I wrote people about, too. I must have been so boring to write to my first year or two, because I was almost role-playing being a revolutionary. This is what I thought, so this is what I now need to project into the world.

It was just this process of, do you want people to see the fact that you're human, or do you want them to see you as an object? Do you want to be Eric King with fears and anxiety and hopes and dreams, or do you want to be political prisoner Eric King? For a lot of people, I was, maybe even still am, political prisoner Eric: Eric who suffered, Eric who was locked up a lot, Eric who was attacked, Eric who fought, as opposed to Eric who still cries when someone's nice to them, Eric who has a hard time breathing around white men with tattoos—speaking as one—because those are the people who might be about to stab me, Eric who loves being silly and joking at all times…

When we started letting those guards down, it started with poetry, like, write it down. I can't always say it, so write it. When that started happening, I got such positive feedback. Then I started feeling safe, and if I feel safe, then I can open up and be vulnerable with people writing me. I never, except for a few people like my homie, Randy, in ADX, I never showed that to the folks inside. I'm not going to let one of these motherfuckers see me crying or being vulnerable or jealous or insecure or silly. No, I'm not showing them that, because they will, like we were kind of talking about earlier, they will see that shit as weakness. They will latch on to that, and motherfuckers do that shit all the time, where they'll listen, they'll ear-hustle your conversations with your partners, and then use that information against you, or to try to pump you up, try to gas you up. The guards do it too. The guards who read our letters, they would come to me and mock me with things about my wife. They would mock her mental health. They would mock my vulnerability.

But our power, through that vulnerability, I gained a power to not give a shit what these bigots say or these idiots say. My community was mine. It's not yours. Prison doesn't own this. Prison doesn't get take hold of my community. Through those people—people like Josh or Badger or Brian,

people like Jules and these other cats that really, really reached out to me —I got to be human to them, and that allowed me to be human when I got released. It's hard, and it's still a project. I sometimes still am shitty, but it's a project, like every day it's how can I be better today than I was yesterday or kinder or softer? Man, I ramble.

Alissa Azar: You're good! This is all great.

David Campbell: It's a good answer.

Alissa Azar: Really appreciate you being vulnerable right now and sharing this with us.

Eric King: Thanks.

Alissa Azar: Could either or both of you maybe expand a little bit on the ways in which race and racism functioned in the facilities that you were in and your experiences with that?

David Campbell: Rikers is not racially segregated. It is just a mingling of people from all backgrounds. I mean, maybe that's not surprising. It's New York City. I don't know if Rikers was ever racially segregated, probably at some point, because, oh, geez, this is America, but I have no knowledge of if there was ever a policy of segregation that ended. There's some cliquishness, but it often seems to be based on other factors, like gang affiliation. For Spanish speaking or also non-Spanish speaking but like of Latin origin people, it's this kind of fluid thing, where it's like, if you look really Puerto Rican but don't speak Spanish, are you going to be in the Puerto Rican section or not? When I say section, people choose to bunk together. Like, there's an available bed there. I want to take that bed next to you, because you're also a member of 'X' group. There's some of that.

White people tended to be cliquier. A lot of people notice that. People of color that I talked to in there would be like, "Yeah, you know, I've been coming to Rikers for a long time, and it's just like three or four white dudes, and they tend to put their beds together, you know...."

Eric King: What do you mean, "put their beds together?" You guys don't have cells in your pods?

David Campbell: I did not. I think Eric will have probably a much more interesting response to that. But I did not, and it was kind of a bummer. Yeah. I kind of wish I had. I met some people... No, I didn't even meet any George Floyd Uprising prisoners, which I was stoked for. I talked about this some in *Rattling the Cages.* I was putting out the word with people that I worked with in the kitchen and that I saw at the yard who were in other housing units. I was like, "If you get anybody who's coming in for George Floyd related stuff, let me know. I got a care package for them." I really wanted it to happen, but it, yeah, didn't happen. I mean George Floyd popped off four months before the end of my sentence, so not a ton of time for all the cases that were actually being prosecuted... They were doing like overnight in the precinct, you know, they weren't going to Rikers. But I met a guy who claims to have gone out "rioting with antifa." He was picked up for something else. He was picked up for heroin or something later. But he was like, "Yeah, I went out rioting with antifa. I have a bunch of coats that I want to sell when I get out."

No real political prisoners. I met a lot of politically conscious people. That was super cool. It was cool to meet and be understood by and just get that low-level respect, which is very nice to have, because you feel like you're in such an alien world, from politically conscious people, jail people, prison people, working class people of color primarily, who understand what's up. That was comforting in a way. It wouldn't change anything if I hadn't gotten that for me, but it's nice to meet someone who's like... You know, I met this old guy who was like, "Oh, you know, when Assata Shakur was on the run, she stayed at my aunt's house." That's fucking cool. I'm glad you told me that. He told me that, because he saw me reading Assata Shakur's autobiography. I met a guy with a huge Los Macheteros tattoo on his arm, a Puerto Rican radical group. We used to talk a lot in the kitchen. I met a lot of people who had radical sympathies and had some sort of political consciousness and kind of understood where I was coming from. That was cool, but I didn't meet anybody who was doing time for political stuff.

Alissa Azar: Absolutely. What about you, Eric? Did you encounter any other political prisoners in your your time?

Eric King: I was cellies with one of our elders. I don't really even want to talk about that right now because of other stuff, but I met a lot of political prisoners that weren't left-wing political prisoners.

who, when I first started, asked me to roll up my sleeves, so that he could make sure I didn't have any Nazi tattoos, because he's like, "You got the look." [*Laughter.*] You know I meet the criteria, like the Nazis would have been very like [*in mock German accent*], "Oh, yes, look at this big blonde head. Yes."

Alissa Azar: What would have happened if you rolled up your sleeve and there was something?

David Campbell: He probably would have told me, "I don't want you working for me."

Eric King: In your jail... In the feds, certain races "own" jobs as well, like in the kitchen the Mexicans will have the meat, the Blacks will have the cheese. I assume by the way you're shaking your head that that is not the situation.

David Campbell: That is not the case. Not the case. I even had a dude... I was making grilled cheeses one day, which is awesome, because, I don't know what kind of food you guys got, but we did not get grilled cheeses. Holy shit. You prepare the food for the court holding cells, right, so you're sitting there mass producing, you know, you're fucking assembly lining two slices of American cheese and two slices of bread to put in a plastic baggy. You got piles of these, right? Man, they let you use one of the ovens. They're not supposed to, but they look the other way. Put some of those on a sheet with some fake butter, put them in there. Incredible. I used to make those all time and just give them away. I'm telling you, I would make a bunch of these and just give them away to everybody. This one guy I know from the yard, I don't really know him, he's like an Italian guy, and he sees me loading these into the oven, and he's like, "Hook a white brother up with a grilled cheese." I was like, "Don't play that shit with me." I swear to God, he looks at me and he goes, "What? I'm white." Because he was kind of like, you know, Mediterranean looking. I was like, "That's not what I mean." [*Laughter all around.*] "What I mean is like, don't make it a thing. I'm going to give these to everyone." There's no racial control of ingredients and stations and stuff.

Alissa Azar: When you were in there, did you meet any other political prisoners?

David Campbell: No, we were in dorms the whole time, 50 and 60 bed dorms. Again, we have very different experiences, but my first couple of months I was like, "I think am going insane." There's no privacy. There's no quiet. There's nothing. You're in a fucking basketball court full of dudes. That's it. Everything you do, every time you fart, every time you get on the phone, somebody's watching it, somebody's commenting on it. It's crazy. I was trying to find a way to get a cell. People were like, "Oh yeah, it's easy! Just fuck somebody up!" I was like, "Yeah, okay, great. I'll just go up to somebody and fuck them up, that sounds like a great idea..." But I got that advice from a lot of people, if it gives you any idea how dumb shit is in there.

But racially, it's very integrated at the official level. Socially, there's people who just want to hang out with their own kind or whatever.

Eric King: Would you guys make meals together?

David Campbell: Yeah! Totally. There's no restriction on that at all. I mean, just because, statistically, there are very few white people in there, and also because I was very wary of seeming like a guy who preferred to hang out with white people, most of my friends were people of color, just because it's like 90 plus percent of the people incarcerated at Rikers. But also I had a couple friends who were white guys, and I met up with one of them here. He's an Irish guy, I met up with him in Dublin in February. It's great to see him. But, you know, at a certain point I was bunking next to him, and then there was this guy from Georgia—not the state, the country—who was bunking next to him, because he showed up and didn't speak any English. Whatever, they hit it off. But I realized at a certain point that we had this white section of three dudes. It wasn't like that, like people weren't upset about it.

But in other dorms you would see some shitty scumbag trying to be cool with everyone but also saying some pretty racist shit, white dudes that put their bunks together, another white dude shows up, and there's an empty bunk, and he's like, "Oh, yeah. Yeah, I'm going there."

Eric King: [*Mockingly*] "C'mon, brother!"

David Campbell: That has a lot to do with internalized white supremacy and feeling, "Wow, we're not the ones in charge here... Wow, we're gonna

get it." Feeling insecure. Whatever. But, yeah, there's no restrictions on who you work out with, who you eat with, who you bunk with. There was a guy, there was another white dude two bunks over, when I was going home, and the dude in the bunk between us was also a white dude who went home, and the other guy was trying to give that bunk to another white dude who just showed up, and I was like, "No, dude. We're giving it to the Jamaican dude, because he's been here for six months, and he's super cool. We're not doing the white section thing. He's going to get that bunk." I was going home in a couple weeks. I had no real horse in the race. But you can kind of break it up that way. It's very social, it's not institutional, and it's pretty flexible.

What about where where you were? I mean, you were in a lot of different places...

Eric King: That is all wild interesting, by the way. Me and you talked about this. Yeah, we've talked about it off camera a lot. I just find it so interesting.

In the feds it's the exact opposite from the ground to the top. You are not doing these things that David just described. It's enforced by violence. At a low security, it's going to be mostly social violence. You're gonna get ostracized or shit-talked or gossiped on. That's all going to be white collar criminals or rats either way. Once you get into the medium penitentiary, that level, you will not do that, and the reason you will not is because your teeth will get kicked in. I would have loved to have had a Black or a "paisa" celly. I was friends with all those dudes, but "your people" will kick your fucking head off. I've seen it. You're not making cups of coffee and sharing them with other races. You're not working out with other races. You're 100% not living with one, you'll get... That's it. You won't get into that cell. You won't make it to bed. That's something I always hated.

One of the ways you could get around some of this in the feds is if you're gambling. You can play cards and games with other races, because it's a gamble. It's a money-making thing. I would play Scrabble 24/7, and "paisas," Blacks, GD's, Muslims, whoever, like, "Come on in." That was a fun way to get around that. You're constantly playing games and cards. Or in the law library, because you're allowed to make money off other races, basically. That's how it is. So my hustle is typing legal work, so I could interact with other races that way. But it's gross. It's gross, and it

mean it's a really ridiculous statute. I could have done sometime upstate. There were some Proud Boys who got hit with the same charge and blew trial like idiots and got four a few months before me. That was a factor. Also, the Manhattan DA's office, I was like, "Okay, it's pretty clear they're trying to do a 'both sides' thing," and I'm the only guy they have on the left right now, so maybe I'll just cut my losses. I wanted to avoid going upstate, because from all the research I was doing, from what little I knew, it seemed like upstate, among other things, they're more redneck-y, they're more Trump-y, they're more cousins and in-laws-y, and they will absolutely fuck you up. This is something that we talked about that I was seeking confirmation of from guys who knew more about life upstate once I got in, right? They were mostly like, "Yeah, dude."

Things are much less comfortable here and much noisier. There's more people addicted to hard drugs who don't understand that you can't just go around farting in front of people all the time. When I say there's more of a prison code, I get the impression in the feds or in the upstate system... It's a little more hectic in jail. Like, you can get stabbed over that in prison pretty easy, I have the impression. Besides the fact that it's noisier and less comfortable in jail, a guy like me, you know, I had a case that got some publicity, I'm an anti-fascist, I was accused of attacking this old man or whatever. They would know that, and they would set you up to get fucked up. I just didn't want to deal with that. From what I understand, the Nazis, the Aryan Brotherhood, and other white supremacist gangs are not super strong in the New York state prison system. I've heard that from a bunch of people, I don't know how true that is.

Eric King: I've also heard that.

David Campbell: Which good. Fuck 'em.

Eric King: Yeah. Eat shit.

David Campbell: They are not on Rikers. I have a friend, a fellow activist, who did some time on Rikers in 2016. He was falsely accused by a gang intelligence officer of being in the AB, and he said, "I'm aware of 12 of you on the island." It's very telling. At any given moment there's thousands of people, I mean the population varies from one year to the next, but 12 people are in the AB. They don't advertise that shit, and they can't. I had the cop that I worked under, the CO that I worked under in the kitchen

got “antifa” tattooed on my face, and people know what that shit is. They know. Not only do you feel isolated from people, it’s lonely. You don’t have no one to talk to. You have no one. Not a single white guy in that prison will openly agree with anything you say. It’s violent. It’s dangerous. I got in a lot of fights. Guards, prisoners. This shit, you’re not above it because you’re a political prisoner, because what you don’t want to be is a political victim. I was lonely all the time. If it wasn’t for letters… It’s hard to even put into words, because you’re isolated as fuck, and no one cares. Not a single white dude in that prison cares that you’re lonely, because you can’t talk about how much you hate Trump or that transgender people are actually people. When it started getting later in my bid, like into the shoes, well, now it’s all by myself, literally. The only people I have contact with are the guards. They hate everything you stand for, so they’re tearing up your cell, throwing away your pictures, throwing away your mail. I got scars on my head. I show it all the time. A guard dumped me on my head when I was handcuffed behind my back. They did that because of the resistance, because of anti-fascism refusing to play into their bullshit.

I took a hard line when I first came in the feds that we’re not losing who we are, and you can pay the price. It’s not guaranteed, but if I had said, “I’m anti-fascist,” in the penitentiaries, I would have had to stand on that, and I would have got stabbed or someone else would have, but instead I got jumped off that yard. The white Nazis said, “You can’t be here.” I said, “Yes, I can.” And they said, “Okay.” And then the guard set you up for them to jump you. That’s what happened at the penitentiary. It’s scary, and it’s lonely, and that’s why we need prisoner support, because people inside can be very isolated.

Alissa Azar: Absolutely.

David Campbell: Yeah. That’s the stuff I was trying to avoid. One of the things I was hoping to achieve in taking the plea that I did for a shorter amount of time, like a comparatively short amount of time compared to what I could have gotten if I go on trial, mandatory minimum, I would have gone to the upstate prison system.

Eric King: What was your mandatory? Three?

David Campbell: Three and a half on the top charge. It’s maximum of 15. I

feels like—you brought up insecurity—man, white victimhood is so real. “They’re out to get us. Everyone’s out to get us,” when it’s really like, “You guys are out to get everyone!”

David Campbell: If you all just chilled… And not try to run everything like dickheads in typical white supremacist fashion, maybe things would just be better for everyone.

Eric King: In the penitentiaries, when you get up to that level, it’s everyone. It’s defending territory. If this is a Sureño cell, it’s staying a Sureño cell. If the whites try to take it, it can be a war over that. Or if there’s three TVs, one of them is a white TV, and if a Black dude tries to take that TV or use it, that can cause a war. Not just a, “Oh, let’s fight about it.” I’m talking a blood-bath over this perceived territory.

David Campbell: Sorry, just to jump in real quick, because I think I understand this, even though I never done prison time, but can you explain why that’s a war? Let’s say I’m a white guy, I’m not invested in this thing. Now there’s this beef over a phone or cell or something that was a white phone, and now it’s going to be a Black phone or a Sureño phone. Why does that cause a blood-bath? Why can’t I just say, “I’m not dealing with that?”

Eric King: Great question. When you’re in the penitentiary system, when you’re at that level, you have to participate, or you will get killed or at least fucked off bad. You cannot sit out. The second you get there, you’re put on the list to put in work, and that’s where you have to jump someone to show them you’re not a coward, to show them that you’re about the life. That way, when shit pops off in the future, you’re not dead weight, because people don’t want… We don’t need an extra body. You have to prove that from the day you get there. It’s called “mud-checking.” If someone takes a white TV, they’ve essentially said in penitentiary terms, “White people are bitches. We don’t respect the whites. We’ll take whatever we want from you.”

I hate racism. I hate it with all my heart. I went to prison fighting against it. But I would have to join them in that fight, or once it was over I’m getting stabbed by those white guys 100%. I will not make it to chow the next day. It’s all about this domination. “No one will take nothing from us. This is ours.” Because the state took so much from prisoners, we now do it

to each other. “You’re not going to take my space.” I’ve seen it. I’ve seen it go sideways. Like a white dude was owed $40 bucks by a Texas MA, and the Texas MA said, “No. What are you gonna do about it?” The white guy had a choice, “I either accept that, and if I do accept that I’m now a ‘bitch,’ and these other dudes are going to kill me, or I make an example of this cat.” They ended up cutting that dude’s stomach open and pulling his intestines out. That guy’s in ADX for the rest of his life.

David Campbell: That seems like a bit of an overreaction over $40. I do understand you have to defend your name, but, Jesus, I mean, you could just cut his stomach up like normal…

Eric King: It could have just been a casual stabbing, but he wanted to make a point to all the races, “You will not disrespect the whites.” That’s really how it is. [*Shudders.*] I’m so happy I’m not in prison anymore.

David Campbell: Again, I just got to ask, because you’ve been to a lot of different security levels and facilities, and I’ve been to a couple different buildings on one island. But, because Rikers is such a crossroad of incarceration, there’s people who’ve done time all over the place, right? Because it’s New York, a lot of people move there from elsewhere, a lot of people are just passing through and they get caught up, whatever. And, because the system doesn’t work, you may well have done time in another state before you moved to New York, and then you get arrested for something else. You meet people who’ve done time in a lot of different places, and I met a few people who told me stories of racial solidarity or solidarity across racial lines in state and federal facilities. I met a guy who said when he was in Arizona, he was in the AB, because he didn’t have a choice. He’s kind of a sketchy guy. I didn’t know if he was just saying that for my benefit. Ayran Brotherhood, if you’re listening and you don’t know what AB is. He said he was an Aryan Brotherhood when he was in prison in Arizona, and he said AB and the Bloods stuck it up together. They went on strike together and refused to work over—I can’t remember what the grievance was. But, yeah, I heard a couple stories like that from other jurisdictions, security level systems, yeah. I don’t know, is it something you’ve ever heard of or seen?

Eric King: By the way, Arizona ABs are not the same as Federal ABs. That dude seems like… I don’t know.

David Campbell: A lot of people make shit up. A lot of people lie.

Eric King: But that stuff can happen when it’s a system-wide thing. Let’s say, in the shoe at USP Lee—that’s a penitentiary in Virginia, USP Robert E. Lee. In the shoe, the kitchen workers cut our trays in half, to where everything we were getting, they gave us half of it, because someone back in the shoe had wrote on the tray, like “Kitchen workers are bitches” or something. They revolted against us back in the shoe. The shoe lieutenant was not doing nothing about it. They don’t care. In that shoe you don’t have radios. You don’t have books. You don’t have magazines. You don’t have newspapers, and you don’t have commissary. So, when your back’s against the wall… We planned a strike interracially there, because it was an everyone thing, and we needed everyone. Those are the situations where crossing racial bounds is “allowed,” but even then, there’s a fine line. There’s a very delicate line, to where if it seems as if you’re playing too hard for them, “your people” will bring you back down to earth.

I ended up getting crushed by the cops for that, for that little small strike. They don’t like racial solidarity either. They do everything to make sure that it doesn’t happen.

David Campbell: They hate it.

Alissa Azar: Absolutely.

David Campbell: They hate it!

Eric King: They hate nothing more than racial solidarity in prison. I helped the Muslims when I was at Florence medium. They started doing some stuff, so I rode with them. The cops tried to get me jumped all the time. They’d go out of their way to whisper in other white dudes’ ears like, “Your guys loves ‘Sand n-words.’ Your guy’s an ‘n-lover,’” to instigate violence, because, if we’re together, they’re not shit.

Alissa Azar: Absolutely. They know the collective power that’s held.

With that kind of segregation, did it ever feel alienating being an anti-fascist political prisoner? In those situations, how did you manage that?

Eric King: From my perspective, every day of my life was alienating. I’ve